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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000635

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [CU](#) [NO](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS: JOINT MECHANISM ABOUT TO HAPPEN!

REALLY! BUT MAYBE NOT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead for reason 1.4 (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Norwegian Ambassador thinks both sides are close to agreement on Joint Mechanism, but it may not be finalized until after mid-April holidays. "Off shore" issue is sole remaining dispute. Kumaratunga may conclude agreement as President, not on behalf of current government. Both sides continue to violate Cease Fire Agreement. END SUMMARY

Joint Mechanism: Close But not Yet There

12. (C) Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattsker told Ambassador March 31 that "good things are happening" on the Joint Mechanism proposal. The two sides, he said, are "extraordinarily close" to agreement, but (in a bit of a non-sequitor) the discussions are "dragging on." The only thing remaining is the "off shore issue," referring to the question of who will control activities offshore. Brattsker said that he had told both sides they might want to just drop that issue entirely. The Tigers had already done some "off shore" work in their areas, like rebuilding of jetties. They were afraid this work could be jeopardized if they did not have a clause, but Brattsker thought that was not so.

13. (C) Brattsker said that Special Envoy Eric Solheim had met with LTTE Political Chief Tamilchelvan in Oslo on Monday. Tamilchelvan indicated the LTTE had some concerns, and that he needed to talk to Prabhakaran. Brattsker speculated that this might not be possible until after the Sinhala/Tamil New Year on April 13-14. Hence no agreement until after then.

14. (C) Brattsker also said that he needed to be sure that President Kumaratunga was as ready to go ahead as she had been the last time he saw her. He was having dinner with Kumaratunga that same night and would get a sense then. He speculated that she might need "at least two weeks" to get her political house in order before signing an agreement. He said that Kumaratunga now might be planning to handle the JVP problem by stating that she was concluding the agreement using her powers as President and the mandate she received in the Presidential election of 1999. This would distance it from the current Government, elected in 2004, of which the JVP is a part. (This strategy was front-paged in one local daily today.)

Cease Fire Problems

15. (C) Brattsker said he continues to be concerned about the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), where there were problems on both sides. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) had tried five or six times to visit the new LTTE airstrip and had been turned down, which violated the CFA. On the other side, the SLMM had visited three times the camp in Government territory of LTTE breakaway Karuna, which had been reported in local media. The SLMM even had a photo of a GSL soldier standing right outside the camp, and a Sri Lankan Army camp was only 500 meters distant. The existence of this camp was also a clear violation of the CFA. Brattsker also said it was disturbing that President Kumaratunga repeatedly stated that she had given the military orders not to support Karuna. The implication was that she was either a liar or did not have control over the military. Either case was disturbing.

Comment

16. (C) Brattsker and the Norwegians continue to push ahead doggedly. What he appeared to imply is that both sides are close, but that each has to make sure it has political cover, and this will take some time. As a result, neither side seems to be in a great hurry.

LUNSTEAD